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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

16 August 1954

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE INTELLIGENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: SNIE 11-7-54: Soviet Gross Capabilities for Attacks
on the US and Key Overseas Installations through
1 July 1957

1. Pursuant to the meeting with your representatives
on 16 August, the attached revised Conclusions supersedes
those in your text of 13 August.

2. This estimate will be considered by the IAC at
10:45 Tuesday, 17 August.

Paul A. Borel
PAUL A. BOREL
Acting Assistant Director
National Estimates

Distribution "A"

DOCUMENT NO. 2
NO CHANGE IN CLASS. ☐ DECLASSIFIED
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS C 1991
NEXT REVIEW DATE: 1 May 81
AUTH: HR 70-2
DATE 1 May 81 REVIEWER: 6514

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

16 August 1954

SUBJECT: SNIE 11-7-54: ^{1/} SOVIET GROSS CAPABILITIES FOR ATTACKS
ON THE US AND KEY OVERSEAS INSTALLATIONS ^{2/} THROUGH
1 JULY 1957

THE PROBLEM

To estimate gross Soviet capabilities for attacks on the
US and key overseas installations ^{2/} through 1 July 1957.

1/ This estimate supersedes SNIE 11-2-54, 24 February 1954.

2/ Key US Overseas Installations: (a) United Kingdom - strategic air bases and forces; (b) Western Europe - strategic air bases and forces; tactical air bases and forces for NATO support; bases and forces for support of naval operations; army forces, depot and port complexes, major headquarters and key bridges and tunnels; (c) Far East (including Okinawa) - strategic air bases and forces; tactical air support bases and forces; naval and naval air forces and army and navy installations; port complexes for support of US and allied forces; (d) French North Africa-Libya - strategic air bases and forces; naval air facilities; (e) Pacific (including Hawaii and Philippines) - strategic air bases and forces; LOC support bases; army bases; naval and naval air bases and forces; (f) Middle East - strategic air bases and forces; naval air facilities; (g) North Atlantic (including Newfoundland, Greenland, Labrador, Iceland) - strategic air bases and forces; naval and naval air facilities; LOC support facilities; (h) Bermuda-Azores - strategic air bases; naval and naval air facilities; (i) Alaska - strategic air bases and forces; ports; army base; naval air facility; (j) Panama Canal and Caribbean - LOC link; naval and naval air facilities; and (k) US Fleet Units - elements of Sixth, Seventh, Second and First Fleets constituting immediate threats to the USSR.

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SCOPE

In planning the actual scale of attack on the US and key US installations overseas the Soviet rulers would recognize that such an attack would inevitably involve general war. Accordingly, some portion of the Soviet nuclear weapons stockpile and delivery capabilities would almost certainly be allocated for use against US allies and for reserve. This estimate does not consider the problem of such allocation, but confines itself to the gross capabilities for attack on the US and key US installations overseas as indicated by the estimated state of Soviet weapons, equipment, and facilities during the period of the estimate.

CONCLUSIONS

1. In attacking the US and key US overseas installations the major Soviet objectives would be to: (a) destroy or cripple as quickly as possible US capabilities for nuclear retaliation; (b) deliver such an attack on urban, industrial and psychological targets in the US as would prevent, or at least hinder the mobilization of US war potential; (c) inflict such destruction on US overseas installations as would be necessary to hamper or prevent the US from reinforcing or resupplying its forces.

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2. The Soviet leaders would probably calculate that in order to achieve success such an attack would have to be accomplished under conditions of maximum surprise. Therefore the USSR would probably launch its initial attacks from such bases and under such conditions as would offer the greatest security from detection.

3. In order to achieve both maximum surprise and maximum weight in an attack on the US and its overseas installations, we believe that the USSR would place chief reliance on nuclear air attacks. Such attacks would probably receive the highest priority because of: (a) the limited capabilities of naval, ground, and airborne forces against the continental US; (b) the security difficulties inherent in the delivery of large numbers of nuclear weapons by clandestine means; (c) the insufficient development of other mass methods of delivery of nuclear weapons on a large scale; (d) the insufficient development of other mass destruction weapons or handicaps to their large-scale use; and (e) the availability of far northern air bases, from which air operations against the US are least susceptible to detection.

4. The areas most suitable geographically for launching long-range air operations against the US are the Kola Peninsula

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area; the Leningrad complex; the Chukotski and Kamchatka areas in northeastern Siberia; and the Baltic-East German area. The Chukotski, Kola, and Kamchatka areas are particularly advantageous as bases for surprise attacks since great circle routes would initially avoid overflight of nations friendly to the US.

5. Present Soviet capabilities for air attacks on the continental US are limited by dependence on the TU-4 bomber, by the apparent lack of a developed inflight refueling capability, and by the relatively undeveloped character of the Kola, Chukotski, and Kamchatka base areas. One-way missions or such range extension techniques as inflight refueling would be required to enable Soviet bomber aircraft to strike important targets in the continental US. We estimate that the capacity of air bases in these areas would permit launching a maximum of about 300 aircraft in an initial attack against the US. If all were committed to one-way unrefueled missions, approximately 250 might reach US target areas not considering combat losses. Such a force could deliver all or at least a substantial proportion of the nuclear weapons estimated to be available to the USSR in 1954, while still permitting a portion of the striking force to be used for electronic countermeasures, escort, or diversionary tasks.*

* G-2 and ONI reservation to this paragraph.

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6. If the USSR elected to utilize the additional bases in the Baltic-East German and Leningrad areas and thus lessen its chances of achieving surprise it could launch a maximum of approximately 850 aircraft in 1954 in an initial attack on the US. However, the great bulk of these aircraft would have to fly one-way unrefueled missions. Approximately 650 might reach target areas not considering combat losses. We consider such an attack highly unlikely.

7. Assuming an allocation of 300 TU-4's against the continental US, the USSR could in addition launch approximately 550 medium bombers against such other targets as key US and Allied installations overseas. Not considering combat losses approximately 450 might reach target areas. However, the USSR will probably rely more on the 2,100 jet light bombers available in 1954 to attack key installations within operational radius of these aircraft because of the greater capability of the jet bomber to penetrate allied air defenses.

8. By 1957 we estimate that the USSR could, by a major effort, develop the capacity of the air bases in the Kola, Leningrad, Chukotski, and Kamchatka areas to permit the launching of approximately 1,000 aircraft in an initial air operation against

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the US. If all of these aircraft were committed to one-way unrefueled missions (or two-way unrefueled missions, where possible), on the order of 750-800 aircraft might reach target areas. The exercise of this maximum capability would involve the expenditure on one-way missions of most of Soviet Long-Range Aviation.

9. We consider it more likely, however, that the USSR would elect to commit substantially fewer mission aircraft. It might launch about 900 aircraft, which could comprise 350 tankers and 550 mission aircraft. Of the 550 mission aircraft, about two-thirds would possibly be launched for the Kola-Leningrad area and one-third from northeastern Siberia. About 450 aircraft might arrive over target areas not considering combat losses. However, exercise of this capability would involve difficult operational and logistical problems, particularly those pertaining to the creation of a tanker fleet. Moreover, the exercise of this capability would involve the loss on one-way missions of about one-third of Soviet long-range bomber aircraft. A number of the mission aircraft would probably be used for electronic countermeasures, escort, or diversionary tasks.

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10. Assuming the scale of attack in paragraph 9 above, the USSR would have 750 medium and heavy aircraft left for use elsewhere. Of this number, approximately 85 percent would be immediately serviceable for attack against key US and Allied overseas installations, for reattack, or for reserve. Not considering combat losses, approximately 80 percent of these launched would probably arrive over target areas. We also estimate that in 1957 about 3,100 jet light bombers will be available for attacks on targets within the operational capabilities of these aircraft.

11. Throughout the period of this estimate the Soviet rulers probably would employ other methods of attacking the US or US installations overseas concurrently with or immediately following a surprise nuclear air attack. They could attack US overseas installations with guided missiles up to ranges of 500 miles and could employ airborne and amphibious forces, ground forces, and chemical warfare. Clandestine attack on the US itself by sabotage, biological warfare, and placement of nuclear weapons, might occur against specially selected targets.

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12. The submarine force of the USSR could, at least in the initial phases of an attack, inflict serious damage on US overseas communications and carry out offensive mining in the shipping approaches to harbors and ports of the US and its Allies, in addition to its potential for launching mass destruction weapons against the US or key US overseas installations within range.

13. The USSR would probably employ ground, airborne, and amphibious forces in attacks that occur simultaneously with or immediately after the initial attacks. Soviet ground forces, particularly in Western Europe, possess a high capability for attacking Allied forces and installations located in forward areas. The additional employment of airborne or amphibious forces would enable the Soviet Ground Forces to attack more distant forces and installations.

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